



Briefing Note: Meeting with Lifting Literacy Aotearoa (via Zoom)

To:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	30 July 2021	Priority:	Medium
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1266658
Drafter:	Vicki Nelson	DDI:	9(2)(a)
Key Contact:	Pauline Cleaver	DDI:	
Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

- **Note** the background information to support your zoom meeting with representatives from Lifting Literacy Aotearoa at 3.30 – 4.00 pm on Wednesday 4 August 2021.
- **Note** that Pauline Cleaver, Associate Deputy Secretary – Early Learning and Student Achievement, is available to attend this meeting if needed.
- **Agree** that this briefing will be proactively released.

Noted

Noted

Agree Disagree

Summary

- Lifting Literacy Aotearoa (LLA) is a collection of parents, educators, literacy businesses and other professionals. LLA wants to provide you with information that they believe will allow you to critically evaluate literacy strategy briefings from officials and assist you make policy decisions.
- This information is likely to be about evidence-based approaches to reading, often called the Science of Reading, and include references to 'Structured Literacy'. LLA

may also want to discuss their July 2020 manifesto, which asks the Ministry of Education and Cabinet to agree with nine statements centred around the Science of Reading.

- The Ministry's literacy strategy team is fully aware of the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy. Current research and evidence are informing the development of the literacy strategy, including the evidence base encompassed by the Science of Reading.

Pauline

Pauline Cleaver
Associate Deputy Secretary
Early Learning and Student Achievement

30/07/2021

Jan Tinetti

Jan Tinetti
Associate Minister of Education

01/08/2021

Background

1. You are meeting with representatives from Lifting Literacy Aotearoa (LLA) via zoom at 3.30 – 4.00 pm on Wednesday 4 August 2021.
2. LLA wants to provide you with information that they believe will allow you to critically evaluate literacy strategy briefings from officials and assist you make policy decisions.
3. LLA may also want to discuss their July 2020 manifesto.

The Science of Reading and Structured Literacy

4. The information that LLA wants to provide you is likely to be about evidence-based approaches to reading, often called the Science of Reading, and include references to 'Structured Literacy'. Both these terms are mentioned in LLA's email.
5. The international body of evidence known as the Science of Reading describes the combined approaches that have been found, through research, to support children to become skilled readers.
6. The term Structured Literacy was trademarked by the International Dyslexia association to differentiate between literacy approaches that are informed by the Science of Reading and those which are not.
7. Structured Literacy embodies the approaches described and recommended in Science of Reading research and applies these to all modes of literacy. Structured Literacy is systematic, explicit, integrated and cumulative instruction that combines and connects listening, speaking, reading, and writing according to a planned scope and sequence of cognitive skill development.
8. Two important ways that Structured Literacy contrasts with commonly used approaches to teaching reading in New Zealand, are the focus on awareness of all individual sounds (phonemes) in words, and the systematic and explicit teaching of letter-sound relationships.
9. The Ministry's literacy strategy team is fully aware of the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy. Current research and evidence are informing the development of the literacy strategy, including the evidence base encompassed by the Science of Reading.

Lifting Literacy Aotearoa steering group

10. LLA are a collection of parents, educators, literacy businesses and other professionals. We have not been provided with information about which representatives will attend the zoom meeting. According to their website, their steering group members are:
 - a. Alice Wilson. Chairperson of LLA. Former policy manager and Playcentre president. Alice was copied in on the email requesting a meeting with you.
 - b. Bronwyn Bayne. Founder and Director of Ako Space School, a small independent school (Years 1-8); children's rights advocate; and former policy and strategy professional. Bronwyn wrote the email requesting the zoom meeting with you.
 - c. Carla McNeill. Former school principal and now Director of Learning Matters Literacy Consultancy. You met with Carla and her colleague Sarah Stock in Tauranga on Tuesday 20 July.

- d. Emma Nahna. Speech and language therapist.
- e. Dr Jennie Watts. Senior Lecturer in Communication, AUT. Jennie was copied in on the email requesting a meeting with you.
- f. Liz Kane. Former Resource Teacher Literacy and now Director of Liz Kane Literacy.
- g. Paula Short. Veterinarian and dyslexia advocate.

July 2020 Manifesto

- 11. LLA's July 2020 manifesto asks the Ministry of Education and Cabinet to agree with nine statements centred around the Science of Reading. The full list of statements is provided in Annex 1.
- 12. The Ministry's new early literacy approach (ELA) includes Ready to Read Phonics Plus books and supporting materials, the Better Start Literacy Approach professional support (BSLA), and Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Support (RR&ELS). Although not using the term 'Science of Reading', the ELA and work on developing the literacy strategy at least partly address the desired shift in literacy teaching and learning behind many of the manifesto statements. Specifically, the Ministry is:
 - a. Currently developing a literacy strategy for the whole learning pathway, from early learning to Year 13. One of the key goals of the strategy is to update and refresh existing supports to reflect current evidence. This will include current evidence on reading (Statement 1 and Statement 8). Another key goal is to ensure that learning is no longer left to chance through the curriculum work programme (partly addresses Statement 3). The literacy strategy work is informed by collaborative work with a wide range of stakeholders (partly addresses Statement 9).
 - b. Supporting the teaching of decoding through the introduction of Ready to Read Phonics Plus books and associated teaching materials, and BSLA. RR&ELS is also incorporating the Ready to Read Phonics Plus books (Statement 2). Additional online material to support the introduction of the Ready to Read Phonics Plus books is currently being developed by an advisory group that includes a range of literacy experts (partly addresses statement 9).
 - c. Funding access to BSLA for all schools' new entrant and year one teachers. This professional support is evidence-based and will be delivered until June 2023 (Statement 7). In the trial phase, BSLA demonstrated improvements in learning achievement for diverse learners, including Māori and Pacific children and across all socioeconomic groups (Statement 4).
 - d. Scoping a coherent, up-to-date package of literacy guidance, resources and tools, including reviewing the *Effective Literacy Practice* book (Statement 6).
- 13. The Ministry is considering LLA's manifesto as part of the literacy strategy that is currently being developed.

Engagement with the Ministry

- 14. LLA and the Ministry have engaged with each other on a range of literacy initiatives. In a 24 June 2021 email to the Ministry, LLA described the working relationship as productive and positive. Within this context, both the Ministry and LLA have acknowledged that there will be times when there will be challenging conversations.

15. During 2021 there have been three engagements between LLA and the Ministry, detailed below.

Visits to schools using a Structured Literacy approach

16. LLA arranged visits to schools using the Structured Literacy approach by senior Early Learning and Student Achievement officials: Deputy Secretary Ellen MacGregor Reid, Associate Deputy Secretary Pauline Cleaver and Literacy Director Erika Ross.
17. The opportunity to see how Structured Literacy works in schools was invaluable and school leaders and teachers shared that they liked the clear direction and support for teaching literacy they received.
18. The Ministry is now in the process of organising visits to some schools who have taken part in BSLA to ensure that senior officials have a complete picture of how new evidence-based literacy approaches are currently being introduced in New Zealand schools.

Feedback on the Ready to Read Phonics Plus books

19. As outlined in the briefing note for your meeting with Sarah Stock and Carla McNeil of Learning Matters [METIS 126530 refers], LLA undertook a Ready to Read Phonics Plus survey of teachers who are familiar with Structured Literacy. The survey was conducted during the first two months of the introduction of the first twenty books to schools and the commencement of the first round BSLA. They received 171 responses.
20. In LLA's summary of feedback they shared that, overall, respondents were very positive about the "direction of travel being shown by the Ministry" and that, while the majority planned to use the books, they also had concerns about the end product.
21. Specific findings aligned with and affirmed much of what the Ministry is planning for further development of the series. The summary of respondents' concerns included:
 - a. *The scope and sequence for teaching sounds moves too quickly because there are too few books at each stage.* The Ministry plans to introduce more books to the series, particularly early in the sequence.
 - b. *The inclusion of kupu Māori increases complexity and is confusing.* We plan to discuss this feedback more fully with LLA because this was not a universal view. The inclusion of kupu Māori reflects the Ministry's policy of including te reo Māori in language and literacy learning. Early feedback from schools undertaking BSLA shows children adjust well to reading the Māori kupu and whānau appreciate their inclusion in the books.
 - c. *The teaching notes at the back of the books and accompanying support materials are insufficient.* The notes in the back of the book are designed to be quick reminders when teachers, whānau and others use the books and are not intended to be comprehensive lesson plans. Teachers who are not familiar with phonics-based literacy will need to access professional support, work with literacy specialists, and use the more detailed online teacher support materials on TKI. We are continuing to refine current teacher support materials and develop additional resources.
 - d. *The Ministry needs to fund PLD for all teachers expected to use the books.* We are making Ministry-funded BSLA professional support available for all new entrant and year one teachers.

- e. *There needs to be more than one PLD provider.* The Ministry went to market to engage providers to provide professional support for phonics-based literacy and using the Ready to Read Phonics Plus books. The University of Canterbury, with BSLA, was the only provider who met all the criteria.
22. The Ministry has a zoom meeting with LLA on 2 August to discuss their findings in more detail.

Engaging with the Te Reo Matatini Team on their Literacy Strategy

23. LLA mentioned that they are engaging with the Te Reo Matatini Team on their literacy strategy in their email to you.
24. However, due to conflicting schedules and despite several attempts, LLA and the Te Reo Matatini and Pāngarau Strategy Project Team have not met to date.

Proactive Release

25. We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Annexes

- Annex 1: Lifting Literacy Aotearoa Manifesto requests for the Ministry and Cabinet

We ask that the **Ministry of Education** and **Cabinet** agree that:

1. There is a Science of Reading, and it is well established with proven efficacy.
2. In accordance with the Science of Reading, word recognition (decoding) skills are paramount to reading success and should be taught from year one, taking into account the prior knowledge and developmental readiness of each child, and involve the principles we set out under the Science of Reading.
3. All teachers should use the Science of Reading as the underpinning of their pedagogy as this is proven to have the most efficacy.
4. This is also the best approach in terms of equity and fairness as it is proven to support all children to read, not just the top 50%.
5. The Science of Reading does not support the three cueing system of reading instruction commonly used in reading instruction in NZ.
6. The Ministry of Education handbooks “Effective Literacy Instruction” be reviewed in light of the Science of Reading and updated to include the Science of Reading and the corresponding evidence based literacy instruction approach (now commonly termed Structured Literacy).
7. Professional development in the Science of Reading should be made available to all schools with urgency.
8. All relevant Government policy, funding and mechanisms aimed at lifting literacy in NZ should be reviewed and aligned with the Science of Reading, and guidance, incentives, and mechanisms developed to support the uptake of the Science of Reading in teaching pedagogy.
9. All work is guided by an Expert Advisory Group comprising practitioners, researchers, and speech language therapists with knowledge of the science of reading.